

Message Text

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ORIGIN OES-02

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO USMISSION IAEA VIENNA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 068591

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH, VS

SUBJECT: ABANDONMENT OF VIET NAM RESEARCH REACTOR

REF: (A) SAIGON 3489 AND PREVIOUS; (B) IAEA VIENNA 2556

1. SPECIAL AIR MISSION NOW UNDER WAY.

. IN EVENT MILITARY SITUATION DA LAT DETERIORATES TO
POINT THAT AIRCRAFT SHOULD NOT LAND OR FUEL CANNOT BE
REMOVED UNDER CONDITIONS OF SMALL RISK, REQUEST EMBASSY
TO APPROACH GVN WITH PROPOSED FALL-BACK POSITION AS
FOLLOWS.

3. USG BELIEVES THAT REACTOR FUEL SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED
TO FALL INTO NORTH VIET NAM HANDS WITH ANY EASE. BEST
WAY TO INSURE THAT THIS DOES NOT HAPPEN (ASSUMING AIR
MISSION CANNOT BE CARRIED OUT) IS TO FILL REACTOR TANK
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WITH CONCRETE TO LEVEL A METER OR MORE ABOVE TOP OF FUEL

ELEMENTS. ALTHOUGH THIS WILL DENY FURTHER USE OF REACTOR TO GVN, THIS CONTINGENCY OPERATION IS CONSIDERED IMPERATIVE AND GVN IS ASKED TO MAKE NECESSARY PREPARATIONS FOR SUPPLY OF CONCRETE AND MANPOWER TO CARRY OUT OPERATION. USG CIVILIAN PERSONNEL ARE AUTHORIZED TO SUPERVISE OPERATION FROM SAFETY POINT OF VIEW AS ASSISTANCE TO GVN, PROVIDED THAT THEY ARE NOT IN DANGER.

4. EMBASSY SHOULD INFORM HORAN AND HENDRICKSON OF ABOVE AND REQUEST THAT THEY HELP IN PREPARING PLAN FOR CONCRETING REACTOR IN SAFE MANNER IF GVN AGREES.

5. EMBASSY SHOULD ALSO INFORM GVN AND USG CIVILIANS THAT WE UNDERSTAND THAT A FIVE-CURIE PLUTONIUM-BERYLLIUM NEUTRON SOURCE MAY BE STORED AT DA LAT REACTOR SITE. SOURCE IS PROPERTY OF GVN. USG IS WILLING TO REMOVE SOURCE BY AIR TO SAIGON OR OTHER SAFER PLACE IF GVN AGREES.

6. CONCERNING REF (A), CURRENT AIR MISSION CALLS FOR AIRCRAFT TO WAIT IN SAN DIEGO UNTIL WORD IS RECEIVED FROM USG CIVILIANS IN DA LAT THAT ALL HANDLING EQUIPMENT NEEDED IS ON HAND OR LOADED ON AIRCRAFT. MISSION CAN BE ACCELERATED AS EMBASSY PROPOSES IF PLANE DOES NOT WAIT AT SAN DIEGO AND PROCEEDS DIRECTLY TO CLARK OR TSN. REQUEST EMBASSY TO ADVISE IMMEDIATELY IF THIS ALTERNATIVE TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE, SINCE WE NEED TO KNOW ESPECIALLY IF HEAVY DUTY TRUCK IS AVAILABLE AT DA LAT TO TRANSPORT SHIPPING CASKS FROM AIRFIELD TO REACTOR AND RETURN. FORKLIFT WITH MINIMUM ONE-TON CAPACITY NEEDED TO HANDLE CASKS. ALSO, NEED MINIMUM ONE-TON LIFT CAPABILITY OVER REACTOR. IF OVERHEAD CRANE NOT OPERATIVE, ALTERNATIVE CAPABILITY (E.G., CHAIN-HOIST WITH TRIPOD) WILL BE REQUIRED. IF THESE ITEMS NOT AVAILABLE DA LATOR TSN THEY MUST BE BROUGHT ON AIRCRAFT FROM INTERMEDIATE STAGING POINT.

7. REF (B) NOTES PRESENCE OF GVN-OWNED FUEL AT DA LAT. DEPT CONCURS THAT THIS NOT BE BROUGHT UP BY EMBASSY WITH GVN. ALL FUEL SHOULD BE REMOVED OR IMMOBILIZED IN PLACE. CONFIDENTIAL

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8. REF (A), PARA 7, RAISES SUBJECT OF RESPONDING TO INQUIRIES. EMBASSY SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT USE STATEMENT PROPOSED. IF

PRESSED, EMBASSY MAY SAY THAT USG IS ASSISTING GVN IN REMOVAL OF FUEL FOR RADIOLOGICAL SAFETY AND SAFEGUARDS REASONS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH USG/GVN BILATERAL AGREEMENT

FOR COOPERATION ON CIVIL USES OF NUCLEAR ENERGY. KISSINGER

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